

JUDITH BAUMEL

## Mother Tongues

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### 1. Praying a Niggun

Ya na na na na na na ya na na na na na na  
Bim bam bim bam bim bim bam  
Ya na na na na na na ya na na na na na na  
Lai diddle diddle dai dai dai dai diddle dai.

The mystics say melody was our first embrace.

How distant that moment. I want words in my eyes,  
the silent embrace before  
a tune cleaves my childish breast.  
How broken and long ago it was before words.

The stone that my father refused  
is now the head cornerstone.

### 2. Cleaning House

After years speaking it my brain  
is tired. It does not want any more  
to remember the snap front house  
dresses with shirred sleeves.  
It does not want to touch terry

towels smeared with grime where  
hands swipe after soapless rinsing.  
Newspapers and magazines stacked  
on tables, chairs, floors, weary me  
who does not want to hear cluck  
or hiss when my cortex misses the mark.